

Modest Mussorgsky: Chorale, “Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells”

NAME: _____

Mussorgsky was inspired to write this famous piano work after viewing an exhibition of watercolors and drawings by his late friend, Victor Hartmann, an architect and painter. The work of both men was deeply influenced by Russian folk themes. The amusing Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells is notable for its chromatic harmonies.

-- From Charles Burkhardt, *Anthology for Musical Analysis*, 5th Ed.

Use the following questions to examine both local and global harmony in the work. Many of the following questions refer to rehearsal numbers written in the score. You may write whatever you feel is helpful into the score as well.

1. What is the form of the movement?
2. Describe the quality of the chords, numbered 1-19, one by one.
3. Discuss the linear shapes bracketed with letters:
 - A – C
 - D – G
 - H – P
4. What is the compositional device used by Mussorgsky from measures 23 through 38?
5. Look for chords suggested in mm. 23 – 38 (try adding up all the strong tones in a measure and stacking them in thirds. Use enharmonic spellings if necessary). What are the most frequently used chords?
6. Is there a “tonal center” (like a tonic) asserted in this movement? If so, what is it and how does Mussorgsky stress it?
7. Is this functional “tonal” music in the traditional sense, meaning that the impulse from dominant to tonic (V – I) is observed?
8. Consider Ravel’s famous orchestration of this piano piece. How does his use of timbre and instrumental technique support the image from Hartmann’s painting?